(c) what action Government propose to take against the encroachers and restore the land to its original status?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) There is no report that a large quantity of protected land meant for village forest have been illegally encroached by the unscrupulous people in the coastal districts of Balasore, Bhadror, Vendrapara, Puri and Jagatsingpur of Orissa as protection of forests from encroachment etc. is primarily the responsibility of the State Government.

(c) To prevent and remove the encroachment on forest land, action is taken by the State Government under the provisions of various State Forest Acts and Rules. Central Government issues guidlines from time to time to the States for strengthening the protection machinery. The State Governments have also been advised to involve local communities in the protection and development of forests under the Joint Forest Management Programme.

**Timber smuggling**

648. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) Whether Goverment's attention has been drawn to the news item appearing in the Pioneer dated 24th May, 2000 under the heading "NE bigwigs in timber smuggling" racket;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken against the persons involved in smuggling of timber?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) On receipt of information, about 200 wagons containing timber transported from North Eastern States have been detained for physical verification. During physical verification, it has been found

that most of the wagons contained substantial quantity of timber not supported by valid legal documents. The timber contained in about 200 wagons has been seized. A Special Investigation Team has been constituted by the Ministry for detailed investigation. After analysing the documents, showcause notices have been issued to consignors of 138 wagons for confiscation and other action against them. Licences of sixty two based industries have been suspended.

**Projects pending for approval**

†649. SHRI VIJAY SINGH YADAV: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of projects pending with the Ministry of Environment and Forests for approval, including Ajay Barrag Project and Punasi Reservoir Project in Bihar;

(b) if so, by when all these projects are likely to get clearance; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (c) Two mining projects in Bihar are pending for forest clearance. No project of Bihar is pending for Environment clearance. Forest clearance proposal in respect of Ajay Barrage was rejected on 16.12.1988 due to non-receipt of requisite information. In respect of proposal for environment clearance, the project proponent has been advised on 3.3.2000 to submit the proposal as per procedure laid down in the EIA notification of 1994 and its subsequent amendments. Proposal for Forest clearance in respect of Punasi Reservoir project has not been received; however, environmental clearance was accorded on 28.6.1992.

(b) Decision on proposals for environment/forest clearance is taken within ninety days of receipt of complete information.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.